

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 30, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

We write to bring to your attention the severe financial circumstances impacting Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on PBIs across the country; declining enrollment and sudden expenses due to the pandemic have left many PBIs in a state of financial ruin. As such, they have relied heavily on state and federal assistance to remain financially solvent. Unfortunately, the funding PBIs received from the three Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund allocations have not been sufficient and additional financial assistance is desperately needed for the long-term success and stability of many PBIs in the United States.

Given the severe financial circumstances facing PBIs and their critical role in educating African Americans, we write to highlight the requirement within P.L. 116-260, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, to waive the section 313(d) wait out requirement for institutions designated under Section 318 of the Higher Education Act. With the change of the PBI Formula grant to a five-year time period in 2016 to dovetail with other Title III and Title V grants, many institutions have been excluded from the PBI grants after receiving Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) grants or from the SIP grants after having received a PBI grant for five years. Other Title III(A) grants to Minority Serving Institutions include a waiver of Section 313(d) (e.g., see instances of statute in sections 316(d)(4)(B), 317(d)(3)(B), 319(d)(3)(B), and 320(d)(3)(B)). This language was included to allow for PBIs access to Title III grants, including the SIP grants and PBI formula grants, and to create parity among the minority serving institutions. The waiver is especially important at present to improve educational access for students attending PBIs and to strengthen these vital under-resourced institutions in response to financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PBIs have a special designation due to the high percentage of low-income, first-generation Black students that they serve. PBIs must serve a student population that is at least 40 percent Black and 50 percent low-income or first-generation, making them a critical lifeline for their student populations' preparation, growth, and success.

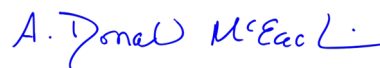
Given the severe financial challenges facing PBIs, we respectfully request that you follow the intention of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and no longer consider the wait-out period for PBIs applying for the SIP grants and PBI formula grants. The ability to apply for these grants is critical for the continued service of disproportionately low-income and first-generation students.

We appreciate your consideration and commitment to ensuring PBIs can continue to serve and transform the lives of their students.

Sincerely,



Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/


Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



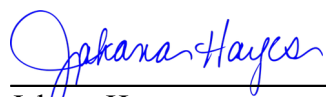
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress